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## Ayut'ia Men in the Service of Burmese Kings, 16th & 17th Centuries

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Burmese kings residing either at Hanthawaddy in lower Burma or at Ava in upper Burma during the 16th and 17th centuries (and for some decades early in the 18th century) made frequent wars with T'ais living at Kaunghan (Keng-hung), Linzin (Vien Chang/Vientiane),<sup>1)</sup> Yodaya (Ayut'ia) and Zinme (Chienngmai).<sup>2)</sup> Some of these wars of course ended with disaster for the Burmese side but others were successful. After each triumphant campaign, several T'ai artisans skilled in various handicrafts and many artistes of the same race accomplished in various forms of entertainment, with or without musical instruments, were sent to the capital of the Burmese king. Selected young men and women would be sent abroad to be sold as slaves,<sup>3)</sup> but other

able-bodied youths were recruited into the armed forces of the Burmese kings.

There are no records telling us who these prisoners of war were, from where they were captured or to where they were sent. There are also no clues that would enable us to trace their descendants. As a matter of fact these aliens mixed so freely with the natives that their roots were completely forgotten. Nevertheless we have some stray references to them in the chronicle called the *Mhannan*: compiled by a Royal Order of 3 May 1829 and also in some reports made after royal orders asking about these T'ai service men.

When a king became interested in some monument or institution, he would ask for all possible information on it or ask someone to compile a history of it. For instance a Royal Order of 12 March 1359 required the collection of lithic inscriptions and a check on the extent of glebe lands throughout the kingdom because the king considered it a great sin to encroach upon

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- 1) Vientiane (Vien Chang) is, to the Burmese, Linzin and its classical name is *Mahānagara*.
- 2) Chiangmai is, to the Burmese, Zinme or Yoon Pyi and its classical name is *Haripuñja* [*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (III): 46, 51, 181]. Even though the Burmans want to locate *Suwaṇṇabhūmi* somewhere around Thaton, *Mhannan*: once mentions Zinme as *Suwaṇṇabhūmi* [*ibid.*: 279].

- 3) A contingent of troops sent by King Hanthawaddy Hsinbyushin to subdue the Shans of the north came back to Hanthawaddy on 29 September 1577. Some prisoners that were brought back were sent to India to be sold as slaves [*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (III): 43, 45].

religious lands [Pl. 521/1]. Another king had a history of Buddhism engraved on stone on 29 February 1480.<sup>4)</sup> A Royal Order of 18 November ordered the tracing of the descendants of people who had once been dedicated to certain religious establishments as “servants of the Religion”. A Royal Order of 7 April 1633 decreed that the history of Buddhism should be updated. Another order, of 7 November 1637, clearly stated that the records of old monuments were necessary so that, for instance, a certain monument, now in ruins, could be restored and the men consigned to it for maintainance, or their descendants, could be reemployed in its service. This order also asked for records concerning men in the armed forces, including those from other countries who served the king as mercenaries or otherwise. This order was followed by another, dated 4 April 1638, requiring the royal scribes to copy old records and file them in the Shwedike-Royal Archives, for future reference. Later orders, for instance those of 17 November 1699 and 24 July 1793, required that such information be updated. Unfortunately subsequent reports are missing though there are, as I have mentioned above, some stray references to them. Pieced together these would give us the story of these T'ai people or Ayut'ia men, in particular those in the service of the Burmese kings.

A series of wars between Ayut'ia and Hanthawaddy or Ava started at the time of King Mintaya Shwehti, 1530–1551,

popularly known as Tabin Shwehti. While the king was away on an expedition against Arakan, some Ayut'ia troops attacked Tavoy. The king got back to his capital on 6 March 1546 and immediately despatched some of his troops to Tavoy. After some fighting, the Ayut'ia troops retreated to Tenasserim and the Burmese captured a few prisoners [*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (II): 239]. A campaign against Ayut'ia began on 13 October 1548 [*ibid.*: 240] and more prisoners were taken, among them one brother, one son and one son-in-law of the Ayut'ia king. After having seized such places as Kampengp'et, Sukhot'ai and P'itsanulok, the king took the arms, ammunition and provisions but allowed his men to take the men and women they had captured [*ibid.*: 248–249]. Peace terms were offered by the T'ai king and, after accepting these, the Burmese king withdrew. He also agreed to release the T'ai princes. He got back to his capital on 28 February 1549 [*ibid.*: 252]. The next king, Hanthawaddy Hsinbyushin, 1554–1581, popularly known as Bayin Naung, was unhappy to notice that there were no envoys from Ayut'ia at his coronation on 12 January 1554. Thailand was considered a vassal state and to send no tribute on such an occasion amounted to an open rebellion. The king decided not to make a direct attack on Ayut'ia but instead marched north on 26 October 1557 and took Chiangmai (also known to the Burmese as Yoon Pyi) [*ibid.*: 323, 364]. An expedition against Ayut'ia was launched on 11 November 1563 [*ibid.*: 349] and the T'ai king

4) The *Kalyani* Inscription of Pegu in the Mon language.

Chakrap'at acknowledged defeat on 18 February 1564 [*ibid.*: 355]. On his return to Burma on 28 March 1564 [*ibid.*: 358] the king took with him from Ayut'ia specialists in various occupations and their families. We do not know their names or number. We know only their professions, which were:

Actor  
Actress  
Architect  
Artist  
Blacksmith  
Carpenter  
Coiffeur  
Cook  
Coppersmith  
Dyer  
Goldsmith  
Lacquerware Maker  
Medicine Man skilled in the Treatment  
of Illnesses in Elephants  
Medicine Man skilled in the Treatment  
of Illnesses in Horses  
Nautch-girl  
Painter  
Perfume Maker  
Silversmith  
Stone Carver  
Stucco Carver  
Wood Carver and  
Wood Turner.

The king got back to his capital on 15 May 1564 and these specialists and their families were given suitable quarters at his capital [*loc. cit.*].

Meanwhile Chiengmai rebelled and King Hanthawaddy Hsinbyushin himself led an expedition there on 22 October

1564 [*ibid.*: 361]. *Ora Dhammarajā*, son-in-law of the Ayut'ia king, was the leader of a force of 500 elephants. There were 10 such groups, at least four of which consisted of T'ai men and elephants. This is the first mention of T'ai men fighting for the Burmese king on an expedition. Chiengmai capitulated without much delay. The king left Chiengmai for Hanthawaddy on 10 April 1565. During his absence there was a slaves' uprising at his capital. The chronicle puts it like this:

At the Royal Residence of Hanthawaddy there was an uprising of all the Shans who were prisoners of war from various parts of the Shan land. Their leader was a Shan elder who had assumed the (Mon) name of Banya Kyan. They collected all available arms, ammunition, horses and elephants and their strength grew to nearly 20,000. After taking the suburban areas of the city, they threatened to take the city itself. All the monks and men living in the outskirts of the city fled into the city where there was not enough food to feed them all. *Bañā: Inda*, *Bañā: Param*, *Taraphyā:*, *Mañ: Tano* and *Bañā: Sañkrañ*, who were in charge of the city defences, wanted to evacuate the city and take refuge at Toungoo. *Narapati Cañsa*, former Chief of Ava, was brought into advise. He was wise, brave and respected and thought that these unruly people could easily be reduced to submission because they were not skilled in fighting. He also pointed out that there was once a similar upheaval

during the time of King Mintaya Shwehti. These people were not rebels in the true sense of the word. Rebels risked their lives either to attack and take possession of a fortified city or to defend such a city when it fell into their hands. These were just marauders out to plunder and rape. He was against evacuating the Royal Family to Toungoo. He even urged the council to fight (immediately). So *Taraphyā*: was sent out to a (suburb of the city) called *Mowāraware* with poor looking horses and ill equipped men, in order to lure the slaves into attacking. At other quarters, called *Mothama* and *Thwan:pa*, *Narapati Cañsū* and *Mañ: Tano* waited in secret, each leading a force of good elephants, horses and men. *Taraphyā*: succeeded in provoking the slaves to attack. Suddenly *Narapati Cañsū* riding on an elephant called *Ratana Proñ Kyoau* and *Mañ: Tano* on another elephant called *Nat Maṅgalā*, appeared with all their men (What followed was not a battle but a massacre.). The unruly mob was scattered. Nearly 500 were killed and over 1,000 captured. The rest fled to a place called *Bakui*: and then to *Baya Kui: Soñ:* and *Dewadat Loñ:*. *Narapati Cañsū* and *Mañ: Tano* chased them until they finally fled into the jungle.

Before the mob was put to flight, no messenger could get through it with a message to the king at Chiengmai. But the wife of *Ū: Bhut*, Lord of *Mruin*, being afraid that the troubles at the capital might spread, fled into the

Province of Chiengmai, and it was through her that the king heard about the uprising. He sent *E Lok Nām*, Lord of Mani, with eight elephants and 800 men, to Hanthawaddy. At *Tuik Kulā*: they met the rebels and *E Lok Nām* was killed and his men captured. Receiving no news from him, the king sent *Caturaṅgasū*, Lord of Syriam, with 300 elephants and 50,000 men. On reaching *Cactōñ*: he sensed that the enemy were too strong at that point and so made a detour to *Thui: Khok* where he crossed the (*Cactōñ*:) river. Here he attacked the rebels whose leader, *Bañā: Krañ*, was killed whilst over 500 of his followers were captured. *Caturaṅgasū* then continued his journey to Hanthawaddy. Meanwhile the rebels regrouped at a place called *Mako*. *Caturaṅgasū*, *Narapati Cañsū* and *Mañ: Tano*, each leading a troop, pursued them. The rebels refused to fight and fled to Dala. The king...left Chiengmai on 10 April 1565...and arrived at Hanthawaddy on 8 May 1565. The Sawbwa of Mongmit requested permission to go and attack Dala. The king agreed (with *Narapati Cañsū*) that the people causing trouble at present were not rebels. They were prisoners of war who had simply misbehaved in avoiding their duties and were misguided in bearing arms against authority. Then he ascertained what damage they had done. They had burned down: (1) Two golden rest houses in the enclosure of *Mahaceti*, (2) all other ordination halls and rest

houses in the vicinity of the *Mahāceti*, (3) the Golden Monastery on the southeast of the *Mahāceti* and 20 minor buildings that surrounded it, (4) the monastery of *Rhañ Saddhamabhāgi*, (5) the monastery of *Rhañ Sāsanad-dharamahāsami*, (6) the monastery of *Rhañ Abhikaṇka*, (7) the monastery of *Rhañ Jotirāyaṃ*, (8) the pagoda and pavilion of King *Dhammaceti* and (9) the Golden Pavilion used during water festivals. In anger instead of entering his palace he followed them to Dala.... Over 7,000 were captured and about 700 killed.... Their wives and children were rounded up and the total number of people captured was over 10,000. They awaited the king's order to be burnt alive. No provision was made to feed them. Burmese, Mon and Yoon monks begged food for them.... *Rhañ Guṇawan* pleaded for clemency.... A thorough investigation was made and only seventy leaders were executed. (The dramatic finale was staged) by making all preparations to burn the rest to death when the Burmese, Mon and Yoon monks appeared and led the captives to safety [*ibid.*: 364–370].

According to this account this was the second time that the Shan prisoners of war rose in rebellion at Hanthawaddy. Some scholars consider this outbreak a serious Mon rebellion [Hall 1968: 267] but the above statement clearly shows that, though it was of a serious nature, it could neither be labelled a Mon uprising nor was it a true rebellion.

King      Hanthawaddy      Hsinbyushin

started another campaign against Ayut'ia on 11 October 1568. King Chakrap'at died on 16 April 1569 [*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (II): 406] and Ayut'ia fell on 31 July 1569 [*ibid.*: 418]. Again a large number of Ayut'ia people were deported to Hanthawaddy [*ibid.*: 423]. From Ayut'ia the king launched another campaign against Laos (Vien Chang or Linzin/*Mahānagara Tuiñ*.) on 3 October 1570 [*loc. cit.*; *Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (III): 2]. A contingent of T'ai troops from Ayut'ia, comprising 300 elephants, 1,500 horses and 30,000 men, took part in this campaign [*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (III): 4]. The chiefs of Mogaung and Mohnyin refused to send their levies. The reason they gave was quite simple.

If we go with the king, we will die in a strange place. If we refuse to go with him he will certainly send an army to kill us. We choose to defy him and die in our own native place [*ibid.*: 23–24, 25].

I think the same reasoning could have been the cause of many other uprisings among the Shans.

An envoy from one Buddhist king in Srilanka arrived at the port of Bassein on 13 July 1576 to ask the king of Hanthawaddy to send help to suppress heresy in Srilanka. Accordingly a contingent of 2,000 men was sent [*ibid.*: 36]. It comprised:

Ayut'ia men	100
Burmese	500
Cassay	100
Kyine Hto men	100
Maing Maw men	100

Shan Salon	100
Si Khwin men	100
Talaing	500
Tavoy men	100
Tayok	100
Tenasserim men	100
Vien Chang men	100

All of them were very strong and very brave. Each one was believed to be invulnerable to any kind of attack with weapons. Their very presence in Srilanka frightened the enemies of the Buddhist king into submission and they came back without fighting.

A queen died on 24 April 1596 at Hanthawaddy and soon after her death there was a famine in the capital. One basket of rice cost one viss of copper, which meant that the price had gone up nearly six times. Confronted with this danger of starvation, over a thousand Laotian slaves tried to escape. All those who were captured were executed [*ibid.*: 98]. This was one of the reasons why T'ais serving the Burmese king became troublesome at one time or another.

King Ngazu Dayaka, 1581–1599, popularly known as Nandabayin, sent his brother, Prince Minye Nandamate, to Nyaung Yan in 1582 when Ava rebelled against him. This prince later made himself King of Ava and came to be known as King Nyaung Yan (*Sthasura-mahadhammaraja*), 1600–1606. When he was sent to Nyaung Yan he was given 10 elephants, and 1,000 men so that he could withstand any possible attack by the troops of Ava. Among them were several hundred Ayut'ia men [*ibid.*: 75; *ROB*

1983 (10 June 1598)].<sup>5</sup> It seems that the Ayut'ia men proved themselves very useful to the prince because when he established himself king at Ava, they were transferred there as the king's own guards. They were known as the Service Men brought over from Nyaung Yan and were also entrusted with watching the city gates of Ava.

The auspicious (day) to have Ava reconstructed as capital is 11 August 1598 and a new palace will (also) be constructed then. The Reverend *Ba:mai*, shall supervise the rituals...to make the city invulnerable.

At the four cardinal points of the compass outside the city wall, four pillars will be erected to hold the name plaques of the city. The city wall must have coverts and terraces as usual (in every fortification) and the city gates must have all the safety devices (to close and open properly). For guards at the gates, select men from Ayut'ia, *Loñ Rhe*, *Toñ Rui:* and *Ra Khuiñ*. Each gate must have 100 guards under one leader and seven assistants [*ROB* 1983 (25 August 1598)].

Detailing some of the Ayut'ia men to guard some of the gates of the city is a fact worthy of note since the fact that one of the fortified gates of Ayut'ia was opened by a traitor in 1569 [Hall 1968: 268;

5) *ROB* (*The Royal Orders of Burma*), collected and edited with an introduction, notes and summary of each Order in English by Than Tun. It will soon be published in four parts under the auspices of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University with the financial aid of the Toyota Foundation.

*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (II): 418] to the soldiers of King Hanthawaddy Hsinbyushin could not have been forgotten. Nor the fact that the king of Ayut'ia attacked Hanthawaddy in 1584.<sup>6)</sup>

King Nyaung Yan seized Yamethin on 26 September 1600 and brought back over 1,000 Kaunghan (Kenghung men) to Ava [*Mhannan*: 1967 (1829) (III): 124]. King Anaukhpeklun, 1606–1628, seized Syriam on 18 March 1613 and within a month deported about 500 Portuguese or men of Portuguese descent and their Indian followers, together with their families, to places north of Ava [*ibid.*: 171]. They were to be given land to settle and cultivate but we do not have the subsequent report as to where they were settled. The king did ask for a report [*loc. cit.*] but unfortunately it has been lost. We have, however, the reports of 1634 submitted to King Thalun, 1633–1648 [*ROB* 1983 (7 November 1637)], according to which the Yoons of Chiangmai and Shan Kaunghan of Kenghung settled at

Amyint  
Ba Don  
Hsin In  
Htan Da Bin  
Kani  
Kya Bwint  
Lay Thoke  
Lun Gya  
Ma Hkwa

6) When King Ngazu Dayaka left Hanthawaddy on an expedition against Ava on 15 March 1584, the Ayut'ia king attacked Hanthawaddy [*Mhannan*: 1967(1829)(III): 76, 79].

Ma U  
Mauk Ka Lan  
Min Don  
Min Gaung  
Mu Tha  
Mye Du  
Myo Hla  
Ne Ta Me  
Nga Ta Yaw  
Pa Hkan  
Pa Rain Ma  
Pyan Hle  
Sagu  
Salin  
Tayaw  
Taze  
Tha Hpan Zeik  
Thit Ya Bin  
Yu Daw Mu and  
Ywa Pu

As regards the Ayut'ia men, we have this statement.

Fifty Ayut'ia men who came to serve King Hanthawaddy Hsinbyushin (1554–1581), joined the cavalry and one of them, called *Ña Prañ, Sañ*, was made their leader. Land under the charge of *Ña Kulā*: was given to them to settle and cultivate. Another group of 125 men under *Rai Nanda* (also) joined the cavalry and were given the village of *Kukkui Koñ*: in the *Mre Dū*: area [*loc. cit.*].

*Mre Dū*: is north of Shwebo. Almost all the villages mentioned above were located in the Kale, Minbu, Monywa, Pakokku, Sagaing, Shwebo and Thayet areas. Most of them, it seems, joined the armed forces and that they were directly recruited into



the cavalry can be taken as a sign that these men were fairly good. One Ayut'ia man called *Tu Rañ Kyoau* was appointed on (3) January 1649 as an officer of the infantry called Thwe Thauk Su. Perhaps the troop over which he was given charge was mainly composed of Ayut'ia men. In one instance we find that an officer in charge of Ayut'ia men was called *Yui:-daya: Mhu:* [*Mhannan:* 1967 (1829) (III): 335 (5 November 1702)].

Most of the Ayut'ia men in the service of the Burmese kings were found to be loyal and the kings even trusted them to guard the palace gates. But we have one reference to a very sad episode.

Ayut'ia men stationed at *Calan:* rebelled on 11 March 1680 and on 17 March 1680 troops were despatched (from the capital) to *Calan:* [*ibid.*: 297].

It is not unlikely that all the rebels were executed. In spite of this unhappy occurrence, more Ayut'ia men came to serve Burma.

*Sa La Wat* with five elephants and 100 Ayut'ia men arrived on 28 July 1695 at the (Burmese capital) to serve the (Burmese) king [*ibid.*: 317].

These men, who wanted to serve Burma, came first to Martaban and from there were sent to Ava. One more group came from Martaban to Ava on 13 April 1703 [*ibid.*: 337] and another on 27 July 1704 [*loc. cit.*].

Linzin (Vien Chang men) also came to Ava on their own account to serve Burma.

On 4 January 1710, 20 elephants and 1,000 Linzins under one officer arrived at Ava to serve the (Burmese) king

[*ibid.*: 346].

Towards the end of the Nyaung Yan Dynasty of Ava kings, many "Pretenders to the Burmese Throne" appeared. One, at Madaya in 1747, was an Ayut'ia man called *Lawa In* [*ibid.*: 383]. Unlike *Nā Oñ Lha* [*ibid.*: 382], who was a Yoon (Chienngmai man) originally employed as an elephant man and settled at Wan Be In near Ava and who later became King Banya Dala the conqueror of Ava in 1751, *Lawa In* was not successful.

Apart from soldiers and farmers, there were many artisans from Ayut'ia but we do not know how they were employed or where they settled. In one reference we find that:

In (1591) King Ngazu Dayaka (1581–1599) had all the gates of Hanthawaddy and turrets above these gates dismantled and built anew after the Ayut'ia model [*ibid.*: 92].

In all probability, Ayut'ia architects, carpenters and masons were employed for this work. Another Ayut'ia man made himself useful serving the community with which he now lived in an entirely different capacity.

(During) the rainy season of (1731) the flood (of the River Myitnge) started taking away a considerable portion of the river bank on the northeastern side of the city of (Ava). An Ayut'ia specialist diverted the dangerous river current and caused a sand bed to appear along the damaged part of the river bank by chanting mantras and using magic squares [*ibid.*: 363].

Such a phenomena was not considered

anything unusual when people believed that the king could stop a rising tide [*ibid.*: 188].

### Conclusion

There were a series of wars during the 16th and 17th centuries between Ayut'ia and Hanthawaddy and also between Ayut'ia and Ava. Many prisoners of war and skilled artisans were brought over to the Burmese side. The majority of the prisoners were employed in cultivation and a few sold at slave markets in Bengal. There were mercenaries too who, because they were noted for their bravery and loyalty, they were entrusted with the duties of guarding the palace and the royal city. Artisans would almost exclusively serve at the Palace. There were at least three serious slave uprisings but, save for the 1565 upheaval, they were suppressed without much difficulty. As

farm labourers Ayut'ia men were sent to such areas as Monywa, Minbu, Pahkan, Sagaing, Shwebo and Thayet. They mixed very freely with the natives in the locality where they settled so that after one or two generations, their Ayut'ia ancestry was entirely forgotten. These descendants of Ayut'ia men, however, could not be adjudged unpatriotic for completely severing their links with Ayut'ia (or Thailand) because they would not understand patriotism as we know it today.

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